

Air, Air Everywhere Glossary

Air Hitchhiker – pollution that travels in the air – like dust, gases or pollen.

Air Pollution – gases or particles floating around that may cause some people to get sick.

Air Quality – how clean or dirty the air is. The better the air quality, the cleaner it is.

Air Quality Index – a color-coded scale that tells us if the air is clean or dirty each day.

Air Quality Advisory – a warning system used to let people know when air pollution is high.

Allergen – something that can cause an allergic reaction. Pollen, mold, pet fur, and peanut butter are all examples.

Argon – a very common gas in air that has no taste, smell, or color. We use it in light bulbs!

Asthma – a disease that makes it hard for some people to breathe.

Asthma Trigger – something that can cause a person to have a hard time breathing or an asthma attack. Examples: pet fur and feathers, air pollution, exercise, and cold air.

Biomonitoring – the act of using plants and animals to find out if there is pollution in our environment.

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) – the gas that we breathe out all day and night long. Can also come from cars and factories. Plants need this gas to live.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) – a gas with no smell or taste. It comes from car, bus, plane, boat, and truck exhaust and can be very dangerous to our health.

Clean Air Act – a law our government passed in 1970 to help protect our air and clean it up, and guess what? It's working! All of the actions taken because of the Clean Air Act are making our air cleaner each year.

Habitat – place where a plant or animal lives because it has all the food and shelter it needs there.

Interview – a way of asking someone questions (and listening for the answers) to find out something that you wanted to know.

Lead – a substance that can be dangerous and harm people if they breathe it in or eat it. Old paint can be loaded with lead and we breathe it in when people burn homes and furniture with old paint.

Milkweed – a common plant in Wisconsin that can be harmed by the air pollutant ozone.

Nitrogen – a gas that is the most common ingredient in the air.

Nitrogen Oxide (NO_x) – a type of gas from car, truck, and bus exhaust. It can be hard to breathe if there is too much of it in the air.

Oxygen – the gas we all need to live! We breathe it into our bodies to keep them working properly. Oxygen makes our muscles, organs, and brains work.

Ozone – a pollutant that forms when VOCs and NO_x bake in sunlight and heat. Ozone can irritate our eyes, nose, and throat when we breathe it in. In Wisconsin ozone forms only in the warm summer months.

Particle Pollution – made up of teeny tiny particles such as dust, pollen, or droplets that float around in the air. They are so small you cannot see them. Particle pollution can form all year long in Wisconsin!

Pollution – anything in the environment that should not be there and makes the land, water, and air dirty. Can include dust, litter, or chemicals.

Power Plant – a building and machinery that makes electricity and from where we get most of our energy.

Stipple – a small black or dark colored polka-dot on the top of a milkweed leaf caused by too much ozone in the air.

Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂) – an air pollutant that comes from power plants, industries, and volcanoes. It is unhealthy to breathe, but it can also be used to keep fruit fresh!

Volatile Organic Compound (VOCs) – pollutants from car exhaust, factories, and even paint, markers, and nail polish remover. VOCs can smell funny.